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17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

Descriptive statement regarding pilot project to test feasibility of "Bard Four-Quarter System." Program, designed to find academically sound ways of using both teaching resources and physical facilities more economically, would have the following effects: (1) Keep the college plant in operation 1 months a year; (2) accommodate twice as many resident students as facilities would otherwise allow; (3) increase the number of students taught by each faculty member by one-third; (4) permit able students to complete their college requirements in 3 years; and (5) require independent academic work while students are not in residence.

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A REPORT
ON THE
BARD COLLEGE PILOT STUDY
AND
FOUR-QUARTER SYSTEM

Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York October, 1958

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THE BARD COLLEGE PILOT STUDY

AND

FOUR-QUARTER SYSTEM

American educators, foundations and the general public are anxiously aware that the college population appears certain to double in the coming 10 or 12 years. They are also aware that the supply of qualified teachers cannot possibly be doubled in so short a time, and that the cost of doubling the physical facilities of our colleges and universities in a decade would be virtually prohibitive.

Experimentation to find academically sound ways of using both teaching resources and physical facilities more economically has been urged by the Ford Foundation, the President's Committee on Education Beyond the High School and, most recently, the special report on education presented by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

Early in July, a radically new approach to these problems was announced by Bard College, and an academic Pilot Project to test the salient features of this program was inaugurated with the opening of the current academic year. If the Pilot Project, which is financed by a grant from The Fund for the Advancement of Education, is considered successful by the Bard faculty and if various practical and technical difficulties can be overcome, the new program will be adopted in May 1959 for inauguration in September 1960.

This experimental program, on which the College has been working intensively for many months and toward which the Pilot Project is a tentative step, is known as the Bard Four-Quarter System. It would have the following effects:

1. Keep the College plant in operation 12 months a year;
2. Permit the College to accommodate about twice as many resident students as its facilities would otherwise allow;
3. Increase the number of students taught by each faculty member by one-third without materially altering the system of seminars, tutorials and individual conference courses that has distinguished the Bard program for the last quarter of a century;

4. Permit able students to complete their college requirements in three years instead of four; and

5. Require independent academic work while students are not in residence.

So far as the division of the academic calendar into quarters instead of semesters is concerned, there is nothing either new or experimental. Many prominent institutions in the Middle West use such an arrangement. The requirement of independent academic work outside the resident term, however, is a distinct innovation for American higher education. Although new to this country, it is a familiar feature of the English universities as "the long vac," when a substantial portion of the year's work is done.

Recognizing that there are many difficulties and dangers in moving toward these goals without ample time for considering and solving practical questions relating to course sequences, faculty teaching patterns and student residence patterns, the Bard faculty decided to spend the better part of this academic year in further study and in close observation of the Pilot Project before making a commitment. If, after a comprehensive evaluation of the experiment in May, the faculty decides to proceed with the Bard Four-Quarter System, it will leave the intervening year, 1959-60, to continue the Pilot Project with such modifications or additional experimental features as may be deemed desirable.

During the trial period the Pilot Project will have no effect on the College calendar. It will, however, introduce independent work for academic credit during the non-resident term in January and February. This requirement effects a change in Bard's annual Field Period, which has heretofore been used almost exclusively for job experience. While three successful Field Periods have been required for graduation, no academic credit has formerly been allowed for the work done.

Under the terms of the Pilot Project a student must earn from 2 to 4 academic credits by independent work in the non-resident term. Seniors will accomplish this by doing the basic research in preparation for their Senior Project or in actually writing the Senior Project. Sophomores will have special assignments designed to prepare them for the Moderation, or Sophomore Review, required for promotion to the Upper College. All other students will be offered a number of

alternatives by which they can earn the required credits. These include:

1. A significant assignment that follows a specially designed first-semester course or is sandwiched between the two semesters of a specially designed year course;
2. A specially assigned individual project designed to fill a particular student's academic needs;
3. A work experience plus either 1, or 2; and
4. A special work experience evaluated in advance as possessing special academic merit. A student who elects this option must make an extensive report to his Division to supplement his work experience.

The Bard Four-Quarter System is addressed directly to the challenge facing American higher education in the next decade. Furthermore, it offers some promise that independent colleges and universities may be enabled both to halt the alarming series of increases in tuition and other fees that has dominated the post-war period and to provide substantial faculty salary increases.

The day that permitted students to loaf or to work at tasks wholly unrelated to their academic objectives for more than a third of the year, while college plants were empty and unused, is past. Bold experimentation to make more effective and economical use of both teaching resources and physical facilities will be required if the independent college and university are to maintain anything like their historic significance in the diversified pattern of American higher education.

It is fitting in many ways that Bard should be the first college in the United States to move toward this kind of experimentation. Ever since it succeeded St. Stephen's College in 1934 it has been among a handful of leaders in carefully planned innovations. Furthermore, its experience with a non-resident term—the Winter Field Period—has accustomed its students and faculty to planning independent work related to educational objectives. Bard is proud to reassert its leadership and to have the encouragement and financial support of the Fund for the Advancement of Education in this experiment.